

**THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE  
AND FENG SHUI APPLICATION IN  
LOW TI KOK MANSION, KAJANG, SELANGOR**

**CHONG KAI ZHEN**

**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

**2017**

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**by**

**CHONG KAI ZHEN**

**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Science**

**February 2017**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At first, I would like to acknowledge those who have helped and supported me in completing this research successfully although I am a hard hearing student. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my respectable supervisor, Professor Dr. Azizi Bahauddin, who has in his kindness attitude and wisdom, for patiently guiding and advising me throughout this research. I also thank him for giving me an opportunity to conduct this research and study on the *feng shui* as well as traditional Chinese architecture on the Low Ti Kok Mansion. Without him, this research would not have been done smoothly.

Furthermore, I would like to also thank my parents, sister, and cousin for giving me the love, support, encouragement, motivation, and affection throughout the process of this research. I would like to express my gratitude towards my parents for pulling me through all the challenges and listening to my sharing on *feng shui*. Other than that, I would like to thank my best friends, Tessa Eka Dermayati, Tan Leng Ee, Tan Choo Jun, Tan Ling, Chew Kha Son, Edwin Loh, and Sara for their help and support. I also would like to thank Florence Mah for editing this thesis.

Besides that, I would like to thank and appreciate Lee Kim Sin, Low Yew Keong, and Low Chee Tian on their sharing on the Low Ti Kok Mansion. I would like to also thank all the participants who had participated in this research. Finally, I also would like to thank my financial supporter, USM Fellowship, for providing me financial assistance throughout my study.

USM, Penang, June 2016

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# **SENI BINA TRADISIONAL CINA DAN APLIKASI FENG SHUI PADA RUMAH AGAM LOW TI KOK, KAJANG, SELANGOR**

## **ABSTRAK**

Tesis ini menfokuskan pada seni bina tradisional Cina dan *feng shui*. Kebanyakan rumah kedai dan rumah agam Cina di Malaysia dibina berdasarkan seni bina Cina dengan menerapkan elemen seni bina Eropah dan Melayu dalam reka bentuknya. *Feng shui* adalah salah satu amalan tertua dalam masyarakat Cina tradisional terutamanya dalam teori seni bina dan juga terkenal sebagai prinsip-prinsip kehidupan. Aliran Pemikiran *feng shui* dibahagikan kepada dua; Aliran Bentuk dan Aliran Kompas, yang mana kedua-duanya merupakan amalan penting dalam teori seni bina. Pernyataan masalah dalam penyelidikan ini ialah kekurangan pengetahuan terhadap rumah agam Cina dalam istilah seni bina tradisional Cina dan *feng shui*, dan bagaimana *feng shui* mempengaruhi reka bentuk dan bangunan rumah-rumah agam Cina. Kajian ini menerokai satu kajian kes baharu iaitu Rumah Agam Low Ti Kok di Kajang untuk mengkaji berkaitan aplikasi *feng shui* dan seni bina tradisional Cina. Objektif kajian dalam tesis ini ialah: (i) mengkaji komponen seni bina dan reka bentuk dalaman, (ii) mengenal pasti prinsip-prinsip *feng shui*, dan (iii) memeriksa aplikasi Aliran Bentuk *Feng Shui*. Kaedah kajian yang digunakan dalam penyelidikan ini ialah kaedah kualitatif iaitu pendekatan teknik penyelidikan sepenuhnya bagi aplikasi *feng shui* dalam teori seni bina. Teknik-teknik penyelidikan ini digunakan untuk mengumpul data berdasarkan alam sekitar, seni bina dan reka bentuk dalaman. Hasil kajian dalam penyelidikan ini jelas menunjukkan bahawa Rumah Agam Low Ti Kok menggunakan beberapa komponen seni bina tradisional Cina, bentuk Lima Elemen *feng shui* pada pelan lantai, dan Aliran Bentuk *feng shui*. Kepentingan kajian ini akan membantu pereka dalam memahami pengaruh budaya.

# **THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARCHITECTURE AND FENG SHUI APPLICATION IN LOW TI KOK MANSION, KAJANG, SELANGOR**

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis focuses on the traditional Chinese architecture and *feng shui*. The Chinese shophouses and mansions in Malaysia were built based on the Chinese architecture with traces of European and Malays architectural elements in the design. *Feng shui* is one of the oldest traditional Chinese practices especially on the architectural theory and also famous a popular life principles. Basically, the Thoughts School of *feng shui* consists of two schools; the Form School and the Compass School, which are important practices in the architectural theory. The problem statement of this study was a lack of knowledge on the Chinese mansions in the term of traditional Chinese architecture and *feng shui*, and how *feng shui* had influenced the building and design of Chinese mansions. This study explored and selected an unrecorded case study named Low Ti Kok Mansion at Kajang as it had no previous documented investigate pertaining to the application of *feng shui* and traditional Chinese architecture. The objectives of this thesis are threefold: (i) to study the components of the architecture and interior design, (ii) to investigate the principles of *feng shui*, and (iii) to examine the application the Form School of *feng shui*. The methodology adopted herein is qualitative research approach to fully conceive the application of *feng shui* and architectural design. The findings of this research clearly indicate that the Low Ti Kok Mansion incorporate some of the components of traditional Chinese architecture, the shape of Five Elements of *feng shui* on the floor plan, and the Form School of *feng shui*. This essential research will assist designers in understanding the cultural influence.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of this research about the traditional Chinese architecture and *feng shui* on Chinese mansions in Malaysia. This chapter also introduces the background of Malaysia, and the Chinese. This research highlights the background and definition of traditional Chinese architecture and *feng shui*. This chapter also presents the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, scope of research, and theoretical framework of this study.

#### 1.2 Background of Research

Traditional Chinese architecture had evolved over three thousand years in China and had emerged into various architectural styles in Southeast Asia since almost two hundred years ago. The ancient Chinese developed the *feng shui* application which became a complex approach that had been incorporated into architectural theory since two thousand years ago. This *feng shui*, especially the Thought School, became more complicated in Chinese buildings during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) (Mak & So, 2015). During the eighteenth century, the number of Chinese sojourners flourished in immigration to Southeast Asia after the legendary era of Admiral Cheng Ho during the Ming Dynasty (Knapp, 2013). Obviously, the Chinese had brought their culture into Southeast Asia from their homeland, China. The *feng shui* philosophy had been spread to the Far East and Southeast Asia, particularly Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia during the beginning of the

twentieth century. It had been a practice in these countries to adopt the *feng shui* philosophy in buildings by consulting *feng shui* masters (Lip, 2010 & Knapp, 2013).

In the nineteenth century, the confluence culture between Western and Eastern began in Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, where there was a boom in economic development (Kohl, 1984 & Knapp, 2013). The wealthy Chinese from China sought economic opportunities in Southeast Asia. They built Chinese mansions as their residences. At that time, the wealthy Chinese admired the Western architectural style and local style. Thus, they incorporated these architectural styles *feng shui* into their Chinese mansions. These Chinese mansions became popular among the wealthy Chinese in Southeast Asia.

Many of these Chinese mansions had been researched in Malaysia. The focus of this study is on one of these mansions, namely the Low Ti Kok Mansion in Kajang (Figure 1.1). Previously, there have been no studies to examine the architectural style of this mansion with regards to the way of *feng shui* has been applied. The name, Low Ti Kok Mansion, was changed to Hulu Langat Hokkien Association as seen today (Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.1. Location of Kajang.  
Source: Google Maps.



Figure 1.2. Low Ti Kok Mansion.  
Source: Low, 2007.

### 1.3 Background of Malaysia

Malaysia is a multicultural country where there is a mixture of cultures of various ethnic groups such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban, Kadazan and Bajau.

Malaysia's population in the year 2015 is approximately 30,073,353 people, of which 91.9 percent are Malaysian citizens and 8.1 percent are non-citizens (Malaysia, 2015). According to the Wikipedia, Malaysian citizens consist of the ethnic groups of Malay (50.1%) then followed by Chinese (22.6%), indigenous (11.8%), Indians (6.7%), and others (0.7%). Figure 1.3 indicates the density of the Chinese population in Malaysia in the year 2009, where Penang and Kuala Lumpur show the highest density of Chinese population.

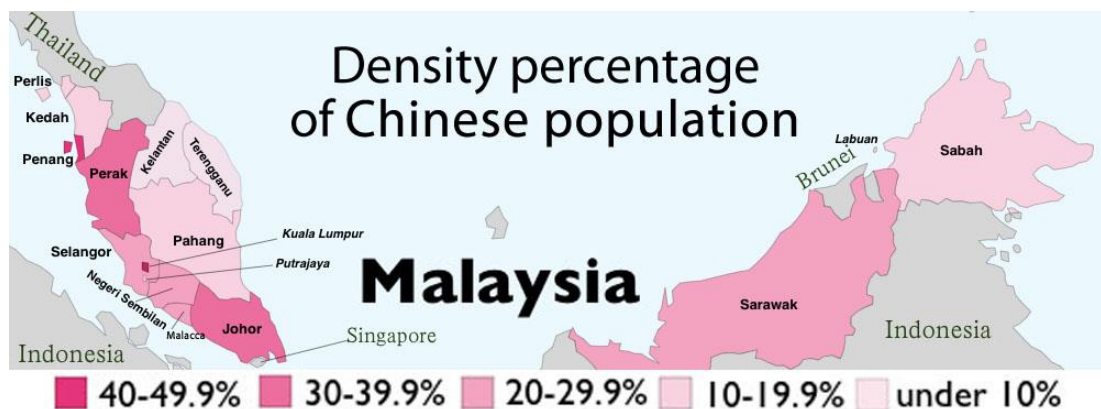


Figure 1.3. The density of Chinese population in Malaysia in 2009.

Source: Modified from GeoCurrents.

Malaysia, which is located in Southeast Asia, has a unique culture and heritage where Malay, Chinese, Indian, and other indigenous cultures meet (De Witt, 2010). Southeast Asia is diverse and fragmented in terms of its physical and cultural geographies (Knapp, Ong, & Gungwu, 2013). The region of Southeast Asia can be divided fundamentally into two contrasting subdivisions especially there are the Asian mainland that extends south from China and numerous islands that include the world's most extensive archipelago (Knapp et al., 2013). The people of Southeast Asia are different based on beliefs, ethnicity, religion, and philosophy.

Malaysia has a fascinating past and has turned into a mosaic of cultures from different ethnicities. For hundreds of years, Malays, Chinese, Indians and other ethnic groups live together in Malaysia. For generations, these cultures influence one

another. The art and cultures of its people, which is evident in its architecture, reflect a colourful heritage and an amalgamated culture. As they live longer in Malaysia, it is clear that there has been a development of different and their own architectural styles on buildings such as religious buildings, shophouses, mansions, clans, and *kampung* (village) built by Malays, Chinese, and Indians. These architectural styles are also incorporates ideas from European architecture of different regions.

#### **1.4 Background of Chinese in Malaysia**

David G. Kohl (1984), the author of “*Chinese Architecture in the Straits Settlements and Western Malaya: Temples, Kongsis and Houses*” introduces briefly the origins, architecture, and culture of the Chinese in Malayasia. That book presents full information on how the Chinese came to Peninsular Malaysia. That book also assists and conducts this thesis to collect useful and helpful information.

The Chinese in Malaysia is mostly originated from China especially southern part. The Chinese originated from China that is an extremely large country with a variety of people based on the geography and ethnicity. The Chinese living in Malaysia can be categorised into three lifestyle groups (Kohl, 1984); there are (i) *baba nyonya*, (ii) Straits Chinese, and (iii) Straits-born Chinese. These categories are believed to be present since the earliest of Chinese immigration. The individual tribes of Chinese speak different dialects such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew, Kwongsai, and Hainanese.

The Chinese in Malaysia are a microcosm of South China in their tribal composition, as reflected by the existence of various dialects, regional marriage, betrothal, and death practices, and a variety of religious and superstitious beliefs (Comber, 1955 & Kohl, 1984). This statement explains that the Chinese are different in ethnicity. However, Kohl (1984) stated the British law and habit changed the

Chinese language or customs slightly until the early twentieth century. The Chinese had modified themselves and their lifestyle since the British Empire settled in Peninsular Malaysia from 1795 until 1956. This change of lifestyle would have impact on the architectural style of traditional Chinese architecture in Malaysia.

#### **1.4.1 Chinese Culture**

The Chinese culture is one of the oldest in the world where the Chinese cultural continuity spans across nearly four thousand years while absorbing limited outside influences (Fazio, Moffett, & Wodehouse, 2008). The Chinese culture has contributed greatly too many of the customs and traditions in China in terms of arts, and sciences. The Chinese culture attaches a great importance to the joyfulness of the whole family with multiple generations (Li, 2009). These components are very important in the Chinese culture to maintain the symbol of Chinese tradition. Cristina De Rossi (2015), an anthropologist at Barnet and Southgate College in London, stated “significantly, individuals within communities create their own culture.” This statement shows that the Chinese created their own culture as an origin of the Chinese.

#### **1.4.2 Immigration of Chinese**

This section introduces the immigration of the Chinese and how they brought their culture into Malaysia. During the past centuries, most Chinese were immigrants from Southern China to Malaysia and Indonesia for looking a better life. They were independent and worked hard to make a peaceful and harmonious life. They settled down and started families.

Immigration is the movement of people from one nation state to live in the new country for a long period of time. Migration had been a recurring theme throughout Chinese history, continuing to the present at significant levels (Knapp et



al., 2013). Most Chinese migrants were mainly Hokkiens, Cantonese, Hakkas, Teocheows, and others who came to Malaysia from Guangdong and Fujian (Purcell, 1967 & Knapp et al., 2013). They settled in Malaysia and built Chinese shophouses, mansions, clans, and temples.

In this section, the chronological evolution of Chinese immigration in Malaysia has been described and how its influence the nature of Chinese architecture and use *feng shui* in their practice. This shows that the concept of expansion of cultural and political frontiers is fundamental to the Chinese immigrants (Kohl, 1984). This insight explains that the Chinese had brought their culture to other places and made an interactive relationship with China. The Chinese migration to Malaysia can be divided into four phases; there are earlier phase, first phase, second phase, and third phase (Purcell, 1967, Kohl, 1984, Munoz, 2006, & Malaysia Chinese, 2015).

The earliest phase of Chinese migration shows that the Chinese had been presented in the Peninsular Malaysia since the era of the Three Kingdoms (221 – 265 AD) when the earliest Chinese such as Buddhist monks visited Peninsular Malaysia but it was not until the fourteenth century (Purcell, 1967 & Kohl, 1984). The peoples of Southeast Asia did not influence the Chinese culture but they took many of the products of Chinese civilisation such as tea, porcelain, and silk (Kohl, 1984). They did not make any permanent settlement in the region (Munoz, 2006). This statement shows that the Chinese culture did not influence the people of Southeast Asia strongly at that time.

The first phase of Chinese migration occurred between the fifteenth century and the nineteenth century. This migration occurred in Malacca and had a cultural exchange and higher culture than the indigenous people (Tan, n.d., Ryan, 1976 & Tan, 2005). The first phase began when Chinese settlers migrated to Peninsular

Malaysia and the cultural confluence between China and Southeast Asia developed as Admiral Cheng Ho, a Muslim Chinese and Ming Dynasty statesman, made a trip to the “South Seas”, known as *Nan Yang* (Tan, n.d., Kohl, 1984, Lip, 1993, & Armani & Arbi, 2014). The earliest Chinese started to build their settlement at the foot of Bukit Cina, or known as Chinese Hill (Moore, 1986), which has the oldest Chinese graves and also several old Muslim *keramat*, or sacred graves. A small temple had been erected at the foot of Bukit Cina and dedicated to Admiral Cheng Ho according to *feng shui* principles to overcome the problem of the graves (Moore, 1986 & Tan, 2005). However, this did not describe how *feng shui* was brought into Peninsular Malaysia.

The second phase began from the middle of the seventeenth century when the cultural influence of the Chinese in Southeast Asia had been largely confined to the Chinese immigrants themselves (Kohl, 1984) and had migrated from Southern China provinces to the Malaysia (Purcell, 1967, Kohl, 1984, Lip, 1993, Tan, 2005 & Knapp et al., 2013). The Chinese traders, (*huashang*) and Chinese contractors (*huagong*) came by sea and their migration occurred from the middle eighteenth century through the early twentieth century (Figure 1.4) (Knapp et al., 2013). The Chinese from Fujian and Guangdong are the richest and largest dialect that built Chinese associations and clan associations (Lip, 1993). This second phase is marked by the large influx of Chinese labourers spread into Peninsular Malaysia states such as Perak and Selangor between 1850 and 1870 (Kohl, 1984 & Vlatseas, 1990) when the British encouraged the Chinese migrant labour to engage in commercial development such as tin mines and rubber plantations in the Peninsular Malaysia (Ryan, 1976, Kohl, 1984, & Hood, 2006, & Knapp, 2013). In addition, the Chinese migrants had brought their own cultures into Southeast Asia including Malaysia (Ryan, 1976 & Hood, 2006). The

Cheng Hoon Teng Temple was built in Malacca in 1646 by mainly migrant builders and craftsmen from Southern China and is the oldest Chinese traditional temple that had adhered strictly to the principles of *feng shui* in Malacca (Kohl, 1984 & Tan, 2005).



Figure 1.4. Pattern of Chinese immigration.  
Source: Knapp et al., 2013.

The third phase occurred in the early of nineteenth century where the huge number of Chinese migrated to Southeast Asia due to political and rebellion issues in China. However, the Chinese migration from mainland China was stopped by authorities during the Cultural Revolution in China in 1948. The number of Chinese migrants declined slightly. The Chinese migrants left their homeland in China due to three factors; there are (i) politics, (ii) economics, and (iii) natural calamities during the Ming and Qing Dynasty (Kohl, 1984 & Tan, 2005).

### 1.5 Cultural Influence on Architecture and Design

Culture is a rich and multifaceted concept. Culture has a strong influence on architecture of physical form (Li, 2009). Rapoport (1969) defined culture as the total equipment of ideas, institutions and conventionalized activities of a people. Culture

is also a cognition structure and symbols (Xu, 2003) and provides the cognitive premises for individuals within a group for human behaviour (Gao, 2010). It will take more than a lifetime to acquire the knowledge of culture in all of its forms and appreciate the splendour and wisdom of its philosophy (Lip, 1993).

The term of architecture is defined differently by different authors and architects. According to Foster (1990), architecture is about people and quality of life. Architecture is the art and science of designing buildings that often include the design of the total built environment from town planning, urban design, and landscape architecture to the construction details, interior design and even sometimes including furniture design and placement (Mak & So, 2015). Robert Powell (1993) defines architecture as understanding each house; its form, hierarchy and spatial arrangement is necessary to ‘excavate’ through several layers of cultural influences. The architecture in Southeast Asia has the influence of the traditional or vernacular that can be readily identified; where the influences of immigrants from China and India are evident (Powell, 1993).

The traditional or vernacular house in Southeast Asia is a microcosm that reflects in a social position and cultural patterns (Waterson, 1993). The Cosmos may be reflected in a microcosm in a whole range of scales, from an entire land through a city, a village, a house as a whole, the space within a house, and the furniture in it (Rapoport, 1969). Nelson Wu (1963) states that the house is the basic cell in the organism of Chinese architecture where the family in the house is the microcosm of the monolithic Chinese society.

According to Rapoport (1969), a house is a place of shelter that protects those inside from the two elements of weather. The surrounding environment reflects many sociocultural factors including religious beliefs, family and clan structure, social

organisation, way of gaining a livelihood, and social relations between individuals (Rapoport, 1969). Thus, the house forms are influenced and modified by factors such as climatic forces, choice of site, and availability and choice of materials and construction techniques (Rapoport, 1969).

*Feng shui* is a part of Chinese culture in architecture and it is meant to achieve harmony between humans and the environment surrounding the building. The application of *feng shui* has at its base a sensibility to recurring patterns of nature and a generally heightened level of environmental awareness such as to maximise or evade sunlight, capture prevailing winds, avoid cold winds, facilitate drainage, and collect rainwater (Knapp et al., 2006 & Knapp et al., 2013). The Chinese house shares elements in both spatial composition and building structure of both small and grand homes throughout the country to create sustainability.

## **1.6 Introduction of Traditional Chinese Architecture**

Traditional Chinese architecture is an ancient heritage architecture (Chuhsi, 1985, Lip, 1993, Steinhardt, 2002) and rich cultural component in Chinese culture where it is full of architectural details (Lip, 2011). The Chinese architecture contains no clear stylistic differences but only slow evolution from simple to more complex forms (Li, 2009 & Lip, 2011). Knapp et al. (2013), the author of *Chinese Houses of Southern Asia: The Eclectic Architecture of Sojourners and Settlers*, introduces the characteristics of Chinese houses in China and Southeast Asia. Some examples of Chinese buildings in terms of *feng shui* are discussed in this part.

### **1.6.1 Chinese Architecture in China**

In the history of Chinese architecture, the Neolithic period marked the true emergence of the wooden frames characteristic of Chinese architecture (Boyd, 1962 & Steinhardt, 2002). The construction of Chinese architecture developed from the

Han Dynasty (Lip, 2011). The traditional Chinese architecture then went on to influence the world especially Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia (Boyd, 1962, Kohl, 1984, Steinhardt, 2002 & Cai, 2011). This shows that the ancient Chinese architecture is a miniature of the long-standing history and culture of China. The Forbidden City is an example of Chinese architectures in China which had adopted the principles of *feng shui* to create harmony with nature during the Ming Dynasty (Jinghua & Hualing, 1998). Over a hundred heritage buildings in China were also influenced by the *feng shui* concept.

### **1.6.2 Chinese Architecture in Malaysia**

Chinese architecture in Malaysia is one of the most prevailing architectural styles which were inspired by architectural details in Southern China. The types of Chinese houses such as *kampung* (village), temple, shophouse, and grand mansion in Malaysia had many variations due to the influence of Western and Malay architectural styles. The traditional Chinese architecture in Malaysia has garnered the attention of scholars, especially Vlatseas, Yeang, and Chen, who described it very briefly in “*A history of Malaysian architecture*” (1990), “*The Architecture of Malaysia*” (1992), and “*The Encyclopedia of Malaysia Volume 5: Architecture*” (2007) respectively. The author of David Kohl in “*Chinese Architecture in the Straits Settlements and Western Malaya: Temples, Kongsis, and Houses*” (1984), had paid more attention on the characteristics and provided a more detailed description of Chinese architecture in Malaysia. The Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion or known as The Blue Mansion is an excellent example of Chinese architecture in Penang which has been incorporated the *feng shui* principle in orientation, form, and decoration (Loh-Lim, 2002 & Goad & Ngiam, 2007).

## 1.7 Introduction of *Feng Shui*

This section introduces *feng shui* in terms of definition and architecture. *Feng shui* philosophy is too complex and it is hard to comprehend the origins of *feng shui*. Chart 1.1 shows the historical development of *feng shui*. *Feng shui* is a popular subject worldwide including among Western and Eastern peoples although *feng shui* is a traditional Chinese philosophy (Carroll, 2002, Yap, 2007, Han, 2009 & Too, 2013). *Feng shui* is a realm of knowledge and practice, a cultural heritage, an ancient Chinese cosmology, and the oldest theory in ancient Chinese history (Lip, 2010 & Mak & So, 2015). *Feng shui* is neither a religion nor magic (Moran & Biktashev, 1999 & Yap, 2007). Other than that, *feng shui* is one aspect affecting the possibilities of a person's life (Menen, 2003).

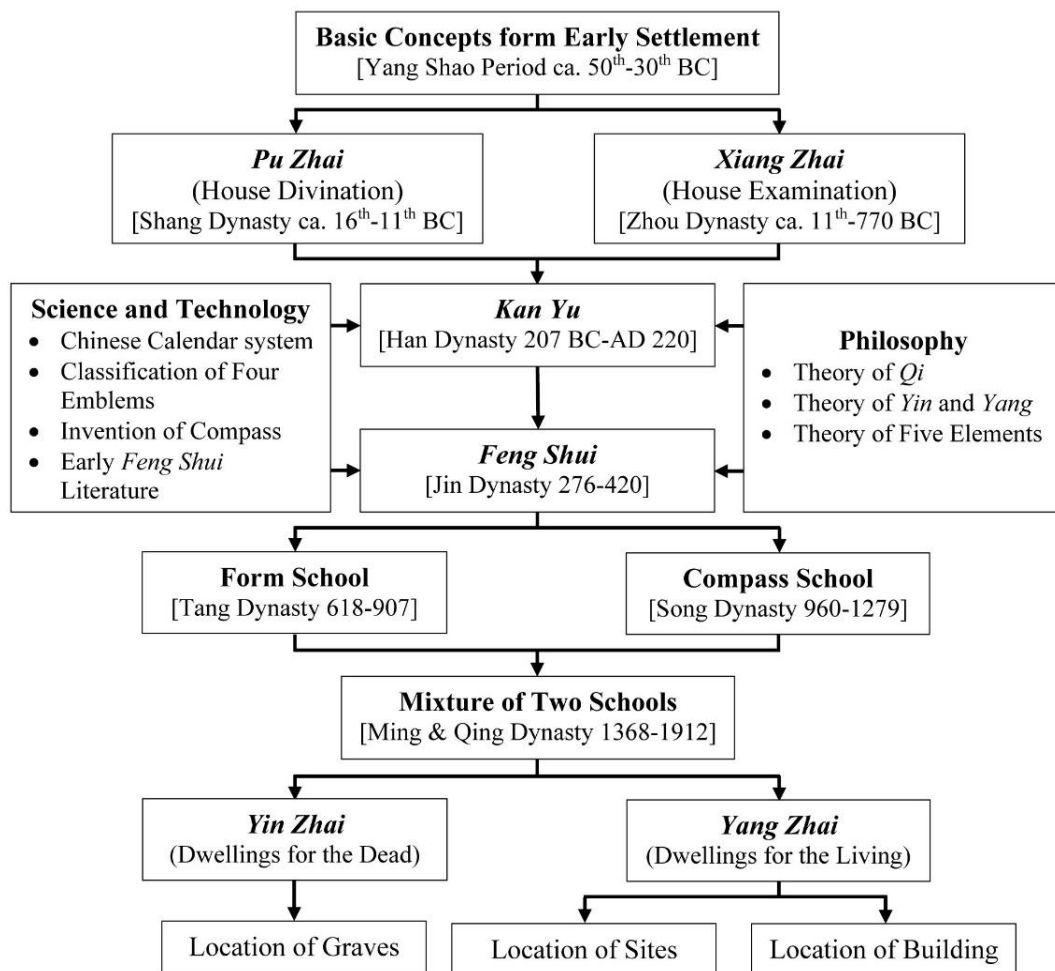


Chart 1.1. The historical development of *feng shui*.

Source: Mak & So, 2011.

There are more than ten thousand websites related to the discipline of *feng shui*, and also many *feng shui* topics have been covered in books, magazines and media (Mak & So, 2015) with the different authors. Lillian Too's *Complete Illustrated guide to Feng Shui* is the first international best seller on the subject of *feng shui* in the year 1996. Another author, Joey Yap published various books on *feng shui*, divination, face reading, exterior, interior and numerology.

Some of the investigations on *feng shui* were conducted by international scholars in field of architecture, interior design, landscape, and built environment. Hwangbo (2010) stated that *feng shui* can be derived as a melange of art and science which governs design issues of architecture and planning, embracing a wide range of disciplines of human interest. Mak and So (2009) were the first to introduce the term “*Scientific Feng Shui*” in the International Symposium on Scientific *Feng Shui* and Built Environment in 2005. They also published their book entitled *Scientific Feng Shui for Built Environment: Theories and Applications* in March 2015 that covered the Form School Approach and Compass School Approach.

The Chinese believed that when *feng shui* is incorporated into the house, it would bring opportunity to their lives. The rural and urban houses serve as the essential stages for each household of production and consumption activities and reflect elements of their religious and cosmological beliefs, in addition to express at least some aspects of the often complicated patterns of personal relationships of the household in terms of age, gender, and generational status (Knapp et al., 2006). The undesired environment will affect the people feel discomfort and negative relationships with other people (Jeffreys, 2000). The landscape of *feng shui* principles can be applied to many aspects of life, such as the placement of buildings and design of interior spaces to bring success to their inhabitants (Poulston, 2009).



### 1.7.1 Definition of *Feng Shui*

*Feng shui* pronounced as “foong schway” is a traditional Chinese philosophy that is believed to have been first developed over three thousand years ago in China. The original name of *feng shui* in Chinese is *kan yu* where *kan* means heaven while *yu* means earth (Mak & So, 2015). *Kan yu* is an abstract term to represent the pseudophysical science of climatology and geophysics (Lip, 1979 & Lip, 2011). *Feng shui* is embedded in the traditional Taoist philosophy and the theory of *kan yu* teaches that any actions taken on earth will affect the heaven, and vice versa (Chen, 2007). The term of *kan yu* is always used in classical texts instead of its more popular name of *feng shui* (Yuan, 2005).

The term of “*feng shui*” first appeared in a passage from the Book of Burial written by Gou Pu (276 – 324 AD) which dated back to the third century or fourth century AD (Lau, 1996, Moran & Biktashev, 1999, O’Brien, 2002 & Hwangbo, 2010). Guo Pu was described and translated by Field (2001),

*The bones of hill and crag, the (arterial) branches of bank and mound, these are the trails of qi. Qi rides the wind and scatters, but is retained when encountering water. The ancients collected it to prevent its dissipation, and guided it to assure its retention. Thus it was called feng shui. According to the laws of feng shui, the site which attracts water is optimum, followed by the site which catches wind.*

*Feng shui* translated literally as ‘wind and water’ is a traditional Chinese practice and philosophy that is used to harmonise people with their environment (Marfori, 1994 & Xu, 1998) and achieved its target to create harmony between nature, humans, and earth. *Feng shui* is an ancient discipline that examined the sites of cities and buildings, and determined the desirable arrangement of interior space (Xu, 2003 & Manini, 2004). Most Chinese believe *feng shui* can help to ensure prosperity in their lives. The concept of *feng shui* had been adopted in most traditional building designs in China for over a thousand years (Mak & Ge, 2015). In

fact, *feng shui* is not a charming Eastern philosophy grounded in superposition. Yap (2007) explained that *feng shui* is a metaphysical science of environmental energies and how to make the most of these energies. Factors such as (i) shape, (ii) layout and structure, (iii) residents, and (iv) time make up the *feng shui* philosophy to create harmony and balance (Menen, 2003 & Yap, 2007). According to Malaysian Heritage Trust (1985), *feng shui* literally means fire and water but has come to mean the pseudophysical science that combines Chinese philosophical, religious, astrological, cosmological, mathematical and geographical concepts to adapt the residence of the living and the dead so as to harmonise with the cosmic order.

There are different authors who define the *feng shui* differently but the basic meaning remained same. So and Lu (2011) state that *feng shui* is the art of living in harmony with the land, and deriving the greatest benefit, peace and prosperity from being in the right place at the right time. *Feng shui* is known as a geomantic of science which is the discipline of understanding from the innate wisdom of the Earth how to live in harmony with it by property siting, orientating, designing, and decorating the buildings where human live and work (Lip, 1979 & Lip, 2010). Paton (2013) claims that *feng shui* is not related to the geomancy and is preferably referred to as spiritual geography that is a system that melds placement in relation to landform, fertility, and the human spirit.

The Encyclopedia Sinica gives the following definition: “*Feng shui* – wind and water, the outward and visible signs of celestial *yang* and *yin*; the art of adapting the residence of the living and the dead so as to harmonize with the cosmic breath – *qi*. For Merriam – Webster Collegiate Dictionary, it defines the meaning of *feng shui* as “a Chinese system for positioning a building in a way that is thought to agree with spiritual forces and to bring health and happiness” and “a Chinese geomantic practice

in which a structure or site is chosen or configured so as to harmonize with the spiritual forces that inhabit it; also: orientation, placement, or arrangement according to the precepts of *feng shui*". The author of Joseph Needham (1962) in "*Science and Civilisation in China (Volume 4: Physics and Physical Technology, Part 1: Physics)*" states that *feng shui* is known as the science of 'winds and waters': however, winds does not mean merely the winds of everyday life, but rather the *qi* or *pneuma* of the earth circulating through the veins and vessels of the earthly macrocosm.

### **1.7.2 *Feng Shui* in Chinese Architecture**

The principles of *feng shui* have been incorporated into Chinese architecture to create harmony between humans, building and environment, and also to maintain a picturesque balance between building and landscape (Yap, 2007). *Feng shui* is so deeply rooted in Chinese architecture that since historical times it has been incorporated into architecture, environmental science, conceptual design, cultural heritage and interior decoration (Lip, 1993 & Lip, 2010). The concept of *feng shui* is also reflected in architectural planning where a north-south oriented layout of a strictly axial kind is symmetrically disposed in all embracing harmony. Basically, the *feng shui* master used the Chinese compass to orient the site before the workers start to build the buildings. The use of this compass is a main practice in Chinese architecture to gain prosperity for the individuals in the home.

Mak and So (2009) undertook their research into *feng shui* and state that scientific research in *feng shui* can be classified into two different ways, particularly (i) the verification of *feng shui* principles scientifically and (ii) the study of *feng shui* logically in a scientific way. They emphasised that their research is in three major areas: anthropological, ecological, and architectural approaches. *Feng shui* is a Chinese traditional architectural theory for selecting a favourable site for dwellings

and provides a theory of building layout and design associated with domestic architecture.

Most researchers focus particularly on *feng shui theory* and its relation to traditional Chinese architecture. For instance, Wang (2012) explains the influence of *feng shui* on the design of traditional Chinese domestic architecture. Mak (2011) explores the pattern of *feng shui* villages in Hong Kong using the methodology of a case study based on the Form School. Xu (1998) explains the influence of *feng shui* models for the design of traditional Beijing courtyard houses from a historical-cultural perspective. She emphasises orientations and positions, the plan arrangement of the Beijing courtyard dwellings, which manifested the idea of *feng shui* model of arranging *qi*, which is derived from the I Ching diagrams expressing Chinese cosmological beliefs such as Magic Square, the Nine Chamber Diagram, and the Later Heaven Sequence.

## **1.8 Problem Statement**

In Malaysia, there are heritage buildings of Chinese architecture, such as shophouses, mansions, and Chinese temples, has incorporated the *feng shui* principles but these buildings have a mix of different styles. The Chinese mansions in Malaysia are elegant buildings in mixture styles of Western and Chinese. Indeed, the Chinese architectural style in Malaysia has its own identity and symbolism as well as culture. However, some of the Chinese houses in Malaysia have been destroyed, abandoned, and have undergone a change of design on purpose. There are not many researchers who investigate and collect information on the details of traditional Chinese architecture in Malaysia. Some of the Chinese mansions do not have detailed documentation of architectural style. This identity of some of the oldest buildings and historical building in Malaysia might be erased from the landscape of

Malaysia if there is no maintenance in preservation and protection. This is a basic problem statement – that Malaysians have neglected to stress on the importance of maintaining the identity of traditional Chinese architecture in Malaysia. In addition, there is insufficient understanding of the information and the details of traditional Chinese architecture as well as its interior designs in Malaysia.

Another problem statement of this research is there is a huge gap of knowledge and lack understanding of why the *feng shui* principles are applied in architectural design and other components. There is also lack understanding of the meaning of *feng shui*. *Feng shui* is the most important philosophy, and complex design tool that is used in China because the Chinese believe that it could create a better living environment between humans and nature, including when it comes to erecting buildings. In the past, Chinese immigrants had brought their culture, philosophy, architecture, and rituals into Malaysia between the seventeenth century and twentieth century. As the buildings were being built, the Chinese strictly followed *feng shui* precepts in the environment, the surroundings, orientation, direction, and also interiors.

The last problem statement in this study is the complexity of the Form School approach of *feng shui*. Mak and So (2015) stated that the Form School approach is considered the knowledge approach in *feng shui* application because *feng shui* had been proved to be a more powerful tool in site analysis. They states that Chinese architecture had adopted into palaces and landscapes an approach that stresses the spatial relationship and the natural environment based on the Form School of *feng shui* knowledge. This is important to identity on the case study by using the Form School theory of *feng shui*. Chart 1.2 shows the problem statement of this study, which is to explain the problems of traditional Chinese architecture and *feng shui*.

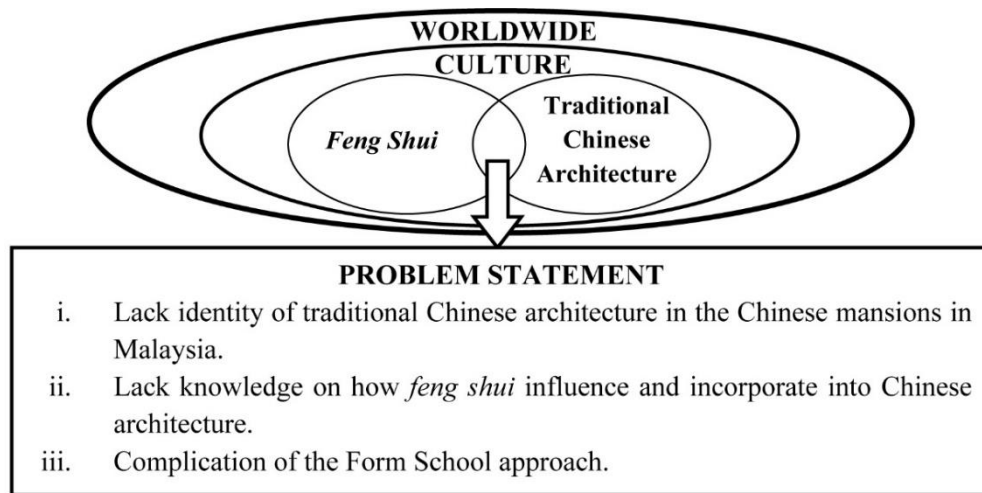


Chart 1.2. Problem Statement.

### 1.8.1 Research Gap

In this section, the gap on the components that need to be researched in this study is discussed. The research gap is a crucial part of the problem statement to solve the question on what elements are missing. There are numerous mansions owned by Chinese merchants in different regions. Chinese mansions in Malaysia had been influenced by Chinese and Western architectural style. The Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Penang and the Hai Kee Chan Mansion in Penang had been documented in detail by Loh-Lim (2002) and Tan Yeow Wooi (2015), respectively. Kee Manor (Seberang Perai), Loke Yew Mansion (Kuala Lumpur), Tan Boon Chia Mansion (Selangor), and Chee Mansion (Malacca) had been covered by Knapp et al. (2013). These researchers and authors had studied the Chinese architectural style component of the mansions.

Since there has been no research undertaken to study one of the Chinese mansions in Klang Valley – the Low Ti Kok Mansion, it is crucial to examine the traditional Chinese architecture of this building lest it be lost for posterity. A case study of Low Ti Kok Mansion has been undertaken so that this knowledge would contribute to and enrich the history and heritage of architecture in Malaysia. The Low Ti Kok Mansion is almost one hundred years old. It is one of the colonial

buildings left in Kajang. It was owned by Low Ti Kok before World War II. This mansion has undergone some changes to its interiors and exteriors. Thus, it is important to protect and save this mansion from further alterations.

Besides that, the knowledge of *feng shui* on Chinese mansions in Malaysia become hazy due to the rapid economic development. The culture and design of *feng shui* are of utmost importance in the design principle. Chinese mansions such as the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Penang was researched by Loh-Lim (2002) who state that the mansion had fully incorporated *feng shui* in its construction. Not all researchers are aware that the Low Ti Kok Mansion had also incorporated the *feng shui* precepts because there is no documentation regarding the *feng shui* of this mansion. Some people in Kajang believe that *feng shui* had been incorporated to the building of this mansion because this mansion was built before World War II. Hence, it is of paramount importance to research this building properly in the form of a case study in order to answer the questions raised by this historical building.

Some researchers including historians and sociologists had discussed that the significance of Kajang as a historical place in the southeast part of Selangor where people of various cultures met (Voon, 2013 & Wong, 2014). However, the history of Kajang is slowly eroding due to the lack of scholarship about it. Consequently, the significance of the Low Ti Kok Mansion is in danger of being forgotten in the records about heritage, history, and culture of Malaysia. The research gap (the study which had not been done) has been filled on the Low Ti Kok Mansion to prevent this state-of-affairs from happening. There are:

- i. No studies done on the elements of traditional Chinese architecture of the Low Ti Kok Mansion.

- ii. No studies done about the incorporation of *feng shui* in the construction of the Low Ti Kok Mansion.
- iii. No examination on the shape of the Low Ti Kok Mansion from the perspective of *feng shui*.
- iv. No studies done on the Low Ti Kok Mansion in terms of the Form School of *feng shui*.

### **1.9 Research Questions**

The influence of *feng shui* in the construction of the Low Ti Kok Mansion in Kajang is documented and analysed as a case study. The questions of this research are;

- i. What architectural style(s) had been incorporated on the exterior and in the interior of the Low Ti Kok Mansion?
- ii. Which principles of *feng shui* have been incorporated in the building of the Low Ti Kok Mansion?
- iii. Has the Low Ti Kok Mansion incorporated the Form School? What elements of the Form School have been incorporated into the Low Ti Kok Mansion?
- iv. What is the relationship between the traditional Chinese architecture and the *feng shui* application on the Chinese mansion?

### **1.10 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this research are:

- i. To achieve the characteristics found in the traditional Chinese architectural components of the Low Ti Kok Mansion based on architecture and interiors.
- ii. To establish the way *feng shui* was applied and its influence on the Low Ti Kok Mansion.



- iii. To evaluate the Low Ti Kok Mansion by the application of *feng shui* especially the Form School.

### **1.11 Focus and Scope of Research**

The focus and scope of this research centered on the cultural approach such as traditional Chinese architecture, and *feng shui* application and nature in a case study of the Low Ti Kok Mansion that is located in Kajang, Selangor. This mansion is selected because some of the Chinese mansions in Malaysia had been researched. Other than that, this mansion has a unique shape and is an example of the grand Chinese mansions built before the Japanese Occupation. Thus, this research examines the mansion based on the *feng shui* principles which were relevant to the architectural theory despite *feng shui* having various ways of application in practice.

#### **1.11.1 Focus of Research on Traditional Chinese Architecture components and *Feng Shui* Application**

This research focuses the architectural style as well as interiors and the way(s) *feng shui* is applied in a Chinese mansion. The architectural design and interiors are a part of culture in the world and are also expressions of form and style among the different cultures. Thus, this research identifies the architectural styles that show the identities of their own respective cultures in Malaysia. Chinese mansions may incorporate the Chinese architectural components and *feng shui*.

This research is undertaken as a case study of the Low Ti Kok Mansion in Kajang, Selangor, which has not been documented in any records. Several mansions in Malaysia had been researched. The Low Ti Kok Mansion is located in the southeastern part of Selangor where there were opportunities in mining and economic development for locals and sojourners during the late twentieth century. At

the same time, the wealthy Chinese migrated to Kajang to seek for work. In settling down in Kajang, the Chinese brought in their culture before World War II.

The Low Ti Kok Mansion has been ignored in research into architecture and *feng shui*. This mansion is a fascinating and monumental landmark in Kajang because this mansion was owned by Towkay Low Ti Kok who was a prominent member in mining field as well as philanthropist of Chinese vernacular education. Some of the people in Kajang claim that *feng shui* had been incorporated in its construction but there is no evidence of this claim in the form of documentations. Thus, this study focuses on this mansion in terms of traditional Chinese architecture and *feng shui*.

Interestingly, the Form School of *feng shui* has become a scientific research among researchers in the field of built environment and architecture theory in this modern era. Thus, this research studies the Low Ti Kok Mansion based on the precepts of the Form School in *feng shui*. *Feng shui* is a tool of complex formula, especially the Thought School, which includes the Form School and the Compass School. The Form School is used for this research because it is relatively more relevant. As for the Compass School, it is too complicated for research at present and this problem is still unresolved.

Chart 1.3 shows the components that need to be focused on in this research. The traditional Chinese architecture and *feng shui* are the main foci of this research. The Low Ti Kok Mansion in Kajang is analysed according these two elements. This study also investigates the interplay between these two elements in the construction of the Low Ti Kok Mansion. This investigation is also conducted to understand the interrelationship between them to yield the output research.

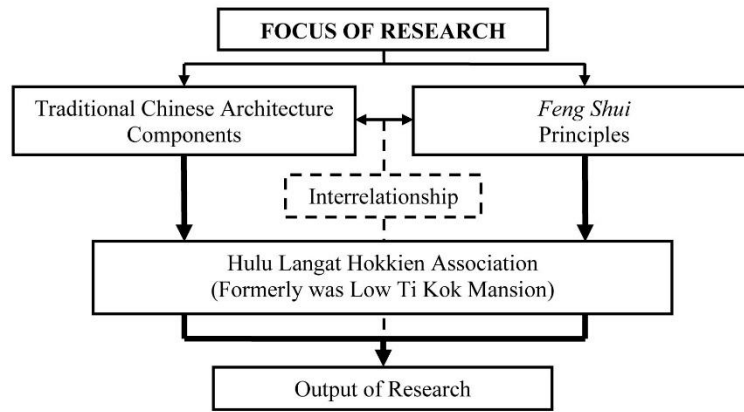


Chart 1.3. Focus of Research.

### 1.11.2 Scope of Research

The scope of this research outlines the definition of traditional Chinese architecture and *feng shui* application in order to achieve the research objectives that were discussed in sub-chapter 1.10. This is known as research parameter and perimeter (Chart 1.4). The traditional Chinese architecture of Chinese mansions in Malaysia is observed to identify the architectural style, characteristics, function, and spatial organisation based on the architectural theory. The traditional Chinese architecture in Malaysia is different to that in mainland China. The architecture and interior design are been examined clearly to reflect the traditional Chinese architecture and Chinese lifestyle. It is important to comprehend the relationship between architecture style and the social-culture of the Chinese.

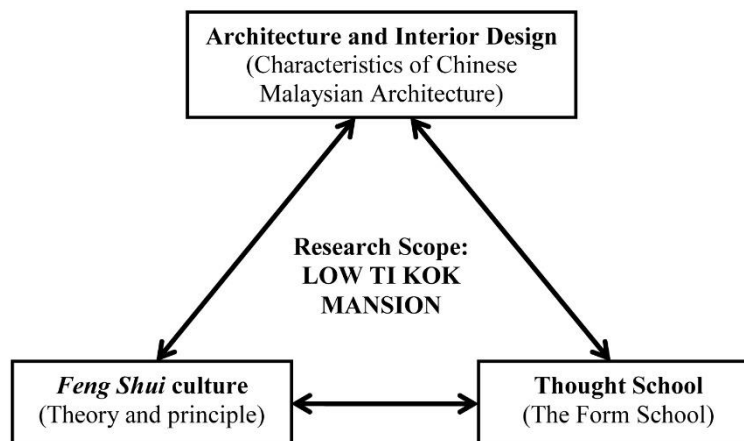


Chart 1.4. Scope of Research.